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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4680
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE
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RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 3645

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002974

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2022

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: TURKEY CONDUCTS AIRSTRIKES AGAINST
PKK IN NORTHERN IRAQ

REF: USEUCOM MESSAGE DTG 152324Z DEC 07 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Turkish Air and Artillery Strikes

1. (C) Turkish warplanes attacked suspected PKK terrorist targets in northern Iraq between 0100 and 0400 hours local time on December 16. Turkish General Staff (TGS) officials provided approximately one hour advance notice to U.S. personnel via the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) in Ankara, which promptly notified relevant U.S. military authorities in order to clear land and air battlespace (ref). The Turkish air operations were carried out against a variety of targets near the Turkey-Iraq border as well as in the more distant Qandil mountain area. Three groups of four F-16 aircraft each were involved. At approximately 0300 hours local, TAF notified local U.S. personnel that artillery strikes would also be conducted in the same areas. At approximately 0900 hours local, Turkish officials notified us that strike operations had concluded.

2. (C) The specific actions taken by the Turkish aircraft are unclear, as are the results of the strikes. Post and MNF-I are currently assessing the action. It is possible other strikes may be conducted in the near future.

Turkish General Staff and Government Announcements

3. (U) The TGS published an announcement on its website informing that Turkish Air Force strike aircraft conducted a comprehensive operation against PKK/Kongra-Gel targets in the areas of Zap, Avasin and Hakurk regions of northern Iraq as well as in the Qandil area from 0100-0400 hours on December 16. All aircraft returned safely to base by 0415 hours local. The announcement further states that long-range artillery of the Turkish Land Forces Command began bombarding targets in northern Iraq following completion of the airstrikes. The statement said operations were targeted solely against the PKK/Kongra-Gel terror organization and not against people living in northern Iraq or local groups which have not committed any hostile acts. Operations will continue as needed and members of the press are advised not to go into the affected areas.

4. (U) Deputy Prime Minister and government spokesman Cemil Cicek stated that the military carried out a successful

operation and that such operations would continue as needed. He said all relevant state institutions were in agreement over what needed to be done. He urged PKK terrorists to give up their violent struggle and return to their families.

Media Reaction to Strikes

15. (U) Local television and radio are reporting extensively on the strikes. Commentators are stating the strikes reflect Turkey's determination to combat PKK terrorist attacks from northern Iraq. The independent NTV news channel is reporting that ten villages in northern Iraq were hit and six persons wounded in the strikes. NTV is also reporting that up to 50 aircraft were involved in the operation, including F-16s from western Turkey equipped with night vision systems. Some commentators are noting that, by engaging targets as deep as the Qandil region, Turkey demonstrated its capacity to strike PKK sanctuaries at some distance from the border area. At least one prominent opinion-maker said the strikes were useful in demonstrating Turkey's determination, but urged the government to accompany its military actions with political, economic and social initiatives aimed at improving conditions for Kurds living in southeastern Turkey.

16. (SBU) A retired Turkish general interviewed on NTV suggested the U.S. likely assisted Turkey with this operation. We expect the Turkish media to continue speculating on U.S. awareness of, or assistance with, the operation. In responding to press inquiries, post will continue to emphasize the discussions between President Bush and Prime Minister Erdogan at their November 5 White House meeting, using approved guidance.

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